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ABSTRACT

The repercussions of an increasingly globalized society present opportunities to communication academics for designing new and interdisciplinary courses, team teaching, and guest lecturing. Among the contributions that communication instructors could make to such an endeavor is to offer information about sociolinguistics. Communication scholars are interested in both the social and the linguistic dimensions of "speech communities," and can describe to students the benefits (access and inclusion) of being an effectively functioning member. To be an effectively functioning member of a speech community, a person needs to know: (1) when to talk or remain silent; (2) whom to talk to, and whether this should be done directly or through another person; (3) what topics may or may not be discussed; (4) whether the communication should be oral and/or written, mediated and/or face to face; (5) which linguistic code (language, dialect, style) is appropriate; and (6) where and when it is appropriate to talk. Communication instructors can plan cross-disciplinary team-taught courses, be guest lecturers in each other's classes, develop new courses, and incorporate new modules into existing programs. Some instructional techniques that should be considered in such efforts include: situational contrasts, case studies, guest speakers, and media materials. (PRA)

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Pittsburgh, 1991

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INTERNATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE CURRICULUM AND IN THE CLASSROOM: SOCIOLINGUISTICS

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INTRODUCTION

We are living in an increasingly globalized society. This globalization has begun to be reflected in the curricula of our colleges and universities and will, I hope, become an even more pervasive aspect as we move toward the Twenty-first Century. This increase in globalization will most likely be reflected in the increased number of foreign language offerings and in an increased number of courses such as international marketing, international economics, and intercultural communication. Even if a curriculum does not add a new course, it is likely that components will be added to existing courses which will sensitize students to international and intercultural considerations.

The repercussions of globalization present several interesting opportunities to communication academics for research and instruction, particularly instruction. In addition to the new courses and new modules in existing courses, we can construct interdisciplinary courses with instructors from other fields such as business and the social sciences. If not team teachers, we can be guest lecturers in each other's classrooms. This is an exciting opportunity for our own growth as well as that of our students.

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There are several contributions that we as communication instructors might make to such an endeavor. We can offer information about nonverbal communication, about the media, and about sociolinguistic factors. It is this last factor, sociolinguistic factors, that I am going to talk about today.

SPEECH COMMUNITIES

I would like to start my discussion with a quote from Dell Hymes (1961, p. 57):

> When we think of learning a language, we may think first of rules of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary; but there is clearly more than this to the acquisition of a form of speech. A person could master these rules but still be unable to use them. He could produce any possible utterance but not know which possible utterance to produce in a given situation, or whether to produce any. If he spoke, he might say something phonologically, grammatically, and semantically correct, but wrong, because inappropriate. He might find hearers (or correspondents) "taking him the wrong way: or responding in ways that indicated that, although understood, he was not a normal member of a speech community.

I would like to add to Hymes' statement, my observation that this person would not be expressing his/her appropriate social role in that community nor would he/she be expressing an appropriate awareness of the communication situation. Fishman (1972) is more specific:

> One of the frequent comments about American travelers abroad is that they know (*at most*) only one variety of the language of the country they are visiting. As a result, they speak in the same way to a child, a professor, a bootblack, and a shopkeeper, thus revealing not only their foreignness, but also their ignorance of the appropriate ways of signaling local role relationships.

We will need to explore with our students what is involved in being an effectively functioning member of a speech community. First, we will need to answer the question: What is a speech community? Bloomfield's (1933) definition is primarily a linguistic definition in that it describes a monolingual, mutually intelligible community. Gumperz (1962: 31) offers a more sociolinguistic definition, he describes a community that is "either monolingual or multilingual, held together by the frequency of social interaction patterns and set off from surrounding areas by weaknesses in the lines of communication." Fishman (1972) adds another social dimension: "symbolic (attitudinal)integration even in the absence of face to face interaction" (p. 24).

As communication scholars, we are interested in both the social and the linguistic dimensions of speech communities. If our students ask why they need to be able to recognize a speech community and why they need to be an effectively functioning member of it, we can easily describe the benefits which accrue to a member of any community, we can detail the benefits of access and inclusion, and we can remind students of the natural urge to be considered "one of us" rather than "one of them."

The next question we need to answer is: What does one need to know in order to be an effectively functioning member of a speech community?

The answer is that one needs to know a great deal indeed, and this knowledge can be categorized into six major factors:

1. When should one talk and when should one remain silent?
2. Whom may one talk to and should this be done directly or through another person?
3. What topics may and may not be discussed?
4. What form should the communication take: oral and/or written, mediated and/or face to face?
5. What linguistic code (language, dialect, style) is appropriate?
6. Where and when is it appropriate to talk?

Of course, we also need to be sensitive to the interaction of these factors. For example, it may be appropriate to communicate with a social acquaintance about a business proposition, but not at her daughter's wedding reception.

(Before we explore these six factors, we should note that they are strongly influced by Hymes' (1962) analysis of speech events, which in turn was an outgrowth of Jacobson's (1960) observations on salient variables in language use.)

1. When should one talk and when should one remain silent?

Our own culture does not offer a universally useful perspective. We tend to view silence as a vacuum that must be filled or as a negative aspect of an ongoing interaction. Chaika (1989) notes that many Americans and Europeans interpret silence as an indicator of hostility or social ineptness. This is not the case with Japanese (Ishii, 1984), who value silence as a part of interaction. People who speak sparingly are seen as thoughtful, mature, and respectable.

Interruptions and overlapping speech offer another area for intercultural miscommunication. Tannen (1984) describes High Involvement and Low Involvement cultures. Compared to the Japanese, Americans are High Involvement, while compared to the Russians, Americans are Low Involvement. In Low Involvement cultures, interruptions and overlaps are less tolerated and may be perceived as rude and pushy. In High Involvement cultures, interruptions and overlaps are more tolerated and are likely to indicate interest and enthusiasm.

2. Whom may one talk to and should this be done directly or through another person?

Many business and social transactions require the intervention of a third party, perhaps a mutual acquaintance or a professional go-between. In many cultures the appropriate third party is a member of the family of one of the people involved in the transcation. Should that family member be an elder in the family or someone closer in age to one or both of the involved parties?

3. What topics may and may not be discussed?

Again, relying on our own cultural norms can result in a faux pas. Americans readily ask about the family members of friends and associates. It is considered a social skill and indicates interest and friendliness. To ask about the female members of a Saudi Arabian family, however, is insulting and shows a lack of respect for the family.

Our own culture allows us to talk about ourselves and even to say positive things about ourselves (though not without limit). Self talk is boorish in some cultures and is not engaged in by socially adroit adults.

Compliments are another sensitive area. In many parts of the Middle East, a compliment requires that the receiver make a gift of it. Admire someone's briefcase, and you could own it. In some cultures a compliment requires a disclaimer from the receiver, in others a thank you and even a reinforcement or a reciprocal compliment.

4. What form should the communication take: oral and/or written, mediated and/or face to face?

In Japanese organizations, intraorganizational communication is often conducted face to face or by telephone rather than by inter-office memo, as is often the case in American organizations.

Telephone behavior also varies from culture to culture. In the United States the person answering the telephone speaks first, but this is culturally, not logically, determined. The caller could speak first, providing his/her identity. Telephone routines also vary as to the nature of the first words of the caller or answerer. Cultural and situational considerations can require a greeting as the first word(s) spoken, or they can require that the answerer verify that the number called is the number actually reached, as is the case in France.

Some invitations are not perceived as legitimate invitations unless they are offered in writing (a wedding invitation, for example), while others can be valid if delivered orally (a Saturday night dinner invitation). Misunderstanding about the appropriate form for invitations can result in hosts that are insulted at having been "stood up" or hosts that are perceived as comically formal and stodgy.

Even the physical qualities of speech can be misunderstood. Chaika (1989, p. 57) tells of misunderstandings that result from the Japanese norm for male voices: masculinity and authority are communicated by low-pitched, loud, gruff voices. These qualities communicate hostility and nastiness to Americans.

5. What linguistic code (language, dialect, style) is appropriate?

This is particularly complicated and, I think, the most interesting aspect of intercultural communication. Within speech communities, even seemingly uniform speech communities such as our own American community, there is variation. In fact, American uniformity is more a surface phenomonon, with substantial variety if we will but look beneath the surface (Fishman, p. 89).

To be an effective member of a multilingual speech community a person not only needs to know the languages spoken, but the appropriate situations in which each is spoken. Tanner (1967) described the complexities of the use of English, Dutch, Indonesian, and ethnic languages in Indonesia: English and Dutch for formal, prestige situations; Indonesian for formal public and interethnic situations; ethnic languages for intraethnic

situations, and Dutch for intraclique situations. Similar patterns are found in Latin America with English, Spanish or Portuguese, and native languages such as Guarani.

In addition to multilingual speech communities, there are diglossic communities. Diglossia is a language situation in which two very different varieties of the same language co-exist. In fact, they co-occur, in that each has its sociolinguistic niche. In the Middle East, for example, Classical Arabic is used for religious and formal situations, while Colloquial Arabic is used for informal, social situations. To use one form where the other is appropriate, would make the user appear foolish or blasphemous. Diglossic situations also exist in the Carribean, where Creole variants function as colloquial forms.

Even within a single variety of a language there exist more subtle stylistic variations which communicate powerful social information. Japanese has its honorifics to signal the relative status of each participant in an interaction, as well as its dishonorifics which enable the speaker to maintain an appropriate level of politeness. Many other languages present the speaker with a choice of two second person pronouns which indicate the status of the interactants and the degree of formality of the situation (Brown and Gilman's (1960) study of the pronouns of power and solidarity is the classic study of this variable).

Every language also has subvarieties, including slang and jargon. Slang is constantly changing and is often outdated by the time it has been captured in a dictionary. For this reason, it is

a very effective sociolinguistic marker of subgroups in a culture. It is not surprising that people learning the language of another culture often report that slang is the most difficult aspect of the language to master. Like slang, jargon forms sociolinguistic boundaries; jargon identifies those whose education and experience qualify them for entry.

In addition to these linguistic concerns, there is also the matter of direct vs. indirect expression. (Actually it is not a dichotomous situation, but a matter of degree.) Israelis tend to favor more a direct approach compared to Americans (Katriel, 1986), while Greeks favor a more indirect approach (Tannen, 1984). It is easy to see how an American could be perceived as indecisive in one culture and lacking subtlty in another. Closely related to indirectness is the avoidance of negative responses. Many an American business person negotiating with a Japanese counterpart has realized -- sooner or later -- that seemingly neutral responses like "We will consider it" or "We will see if it is possible" actually are polite refusals.

In any language there are appropriate ways to engage in phatic communication. In our culture, "How are you?" is no more a request for the details of one's current health situation than "Have you eaten?" is a request for the details of one's gastronomic experiences in Thailand.

Finally, whether we are talking about different languages, different dialects, or stylistic differences of a single languages, these linguistic variants can change within a single interaction.

In order to have mastered the ability to switch codes effectively, a speaker needs to be aware of how these code switches are signaled and who is the appropriate person to do this.

6. Where and when is it appropriate to talk?

The "hurry-up" American who is used to getting to the point of a business meeting and concluding business as soon as possible has become almost a cliche. Latin Americans often feel rushed and even suspicious of this pace. They want more time to become acquainted with the people they will be doing business with and feel that talking too soon about business is not good business.

Places of worship offer another situation where intercultural miscommunication can occur. For some people (for example, many Christians in our own culture) the religious experience begins once one enters the place of worship, and therefore any talking must be related to the religious experience (for example, a request for a prayer book that is out of reach). For others, the religious experience does not begin until the service itself begins and they may talk animatedly about anything they wish until then. It is easy to see that the first group could conclude erroneously that members of the second group do not take religion seriously.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

As I stated before, we can plan our instruction as cross-disciplinary team-taught courses, we can be guest lecturers in each other's classes, we can develop new courses, and we can incorporate

new modules into existing courses. Some of our work may be targeted at a specific culture, for example, we could focus on Japan. Some of our work could focus on geographic areas, such as the Pacific rim or Latin America. Some of our work could be an overview of general considerations. However we plan to structure and target our efforts to make our students more aware of the international and intercultural aspects of communication, there are some instructional techniques that we should consider.

1. Situational Contrasts

We can explore the ways in which people from different cultures interact in commonly encountered situations such as dining at a restaurant, getting acquainted with a new co-worker, renting a home, and initiating or responding to a social invitation.

2. Case Studies

We can construct scenarios of these situations or draw upon the actual experiences of people who have lived in other cultures. We can analyze these case studies and have the students explore them experientially through role playing.

3. Guest Speakers

Most campuses are fortunate to have students, faculty, administrators, and other employees who grew up in or have lived in other cultures. We should ask them to share their experiences with our students. Even if they prefer not to be guest speakers, they may agree to participate in informal question and answer sessions or they may share their experiences with us outside of the classroom, to be shared later with our students.

4. Media Materials

Films, commercials, and advertisements constructed by members of another culture for members of that culture can be very valuable windows into the culture, even with the barrier posed by language differences. Someone familiar with the "other" language can lessen this problem.

LAST WORDS

Finally, we should not forget that we, ourselves, are a central part of this effort. We should continue to learn more about the exciting diversity of human experience. We should learn more about other cultures from our friends and colleagues who have intercultural experiences, we should attend international conferences when we can, we should consider hosting international visitors, and we should consider participating in a foreign exchange program ourselves. And I am certain that as the world becomes increasingly interrelated and as our institutions become increasingly globalized, there will be more and more opportunities for this kind of learning.